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 ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 /055 W
 -----022437 130102Z /64

O R 122000Z DEC 77
 FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3662
 INFO AMEMBASSY ASUNCION
 AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
 AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

[REDACTED] BUENOS AIRES 9420

E.O. 11652 GDS
 TAGS SHUM, AR
 SUBJECT DISAPPEARANCES REPORTED OF MOTHERS OF PLAZA DE MAYO
 AND THEIR SUPPORTERS

1. SUMMARY: IN WHAT APPEARS TO BE CONCERTED GOVERNMENT ACTION,
 ABOUT SIXTEEN PERSONS ASSOCIATED THE "MOTHERS OF THE PLAZA DE MAYO"
 ARE REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN TAKEN BY SECURITY AUTHORITIES ON
 DECEMBER 8. ANOTHER WOMAN PROMINENT IN THE MOVEMENT WAS SNATCHED
 DECEMBER 10. THE WHEREABOUTS OF THOSE TAKEN ARE UNKNOWN. DEPARTMENT
 AND EMBASSY HAVE BEEN ASKED TO HELP SEEK RELEASE OF THESE PERSONS.
 END SUMMARY.

2. SOME FIFTEEN PERSONS--BOTH WOMEN AND MEN--ASSOCIATED WITH THE
 "MOTHERS OF THE PLAZA DE MAYO" PROTEST MOVEMENT WERE TAKEN INTO
 CUSTODY THE EVENING OF DECEMBER 8 FROM THE STEPS OF A CHURCH BY
 PERSONS WHO DESCRIBED THEMSELVES AS SECURITY OFFICERS. ON THE SAME
 NIGHT REMO BERARDO, AN ACTIVIST SUPPORTER OF THE MOTHERS GROUP WAS
 PICKED UP AT HIS HOME IN BUENOS AIRES' LA BOCA DISTRICT.
 EARLY SATURDAY MORNING DECEMBER 10 SEVERAL UNIDENTIFIED MEN
 PICKED UP MRS. ASUSANA DE VICENTI, THE MOTHER CREDITED WITH HAVING
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ORIGINATED THE IDEA OF WEEKLY MEETINGS IN THE PLAZA DE MAYO,
 SOON AFTER MRS. DE VICENTI LEFT HER HOME FOR SHOPPING. REPORTEDLY

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ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)
 U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/PS
 Margaret P. Grafield, Director
 (X) Release () Excise () Deny
 Exemption(s):
 () Classify as () In Part (X) In Full
 () Extend as () Downgrade to
 Date Declassify on Reason

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MRS. DE VICENTE STRUGGLED, BUT IN THE END WAS FORCED INTO THE ABDUCTORS VEHICLES. AS OF NOON MONDAY DECEMBER 12 NOTHING WAS KNOWN OF THE WHEREABOUTS OF ANY OF THE PERSONS TAKEN.

3. THE MOTHERS' GROUP HAD BECOME PARTICULARLY ACTIVE AS THE CHRISTMAS SEASON APPROACHED, PLANNING TWO MAJOR DEMONSTRATIONS AND PLACEMENT OF A LARGE ADVERTISEMENT IN "LA NACION," A LEADING BUENOS AIRES DAILY. THE CHURCH FROM WHICH SOME FIFTEEN PERSONS WERE TAKEN WAS ONE OF THREE POINTS IN THE CITY FOR COLLECTING SIGNATURES AND MONEY FOR THE PAID ADVERTISEMENT. IN ADDITION TO TAKING THE FIFTEEN GROUP MEMBERS, WHO HAD BEEN MEETING INSIDE THE CHURCH, "SECURITY OFFICERS" -- WHO USED SIX UNMARKED CARS FOR THEIR OPERATION -- TOOK SOME \$250 COLLECTED BY THE GROUP AND A LIST OF SIGNATURES FOR THE ADVERTISEMENT. (COMMENT: THE ADVERTISEMENT DID APPEAR IN LA NACION'S DECEMBER 10 EDITION.)

4. THE PARTICULAR COLLECTION SITE AT WHICH THE ACTION TOOK PLACE -- THE CHURCH OF SANTA CRUZ-- WAS BEING MANNED BY MEMBERS OF THE "MOVIMIENTO ECUMENICO POR LOS DERECHOS HUMANOS" ("MEDH"), DESCRIBED AS AN ARGENTINE AFFILIATE OF THE WORLDWIDE CATHOLIC ORGANIZATION "PAZ Y JUSTICIA." ACCORDING TO THE BUENOS AIRES HERALD -- THE ONLY LOCAL NEWSPAPER TO COVER THE EVENT-- MEMBERS OF THE GROUP TAKEN INCLUDED ESTER CARRIAGA, ONE OF THE MOTHERS PROMINENTS IN THE PROTEST MOVEMENT, AND A FRENCH NUN KNOWN AS "HERMANA ALICIA." OTHER PERSONS TAKEN INTO CUSTODY AND LISTED BY THE HERALD WERE MARIA PONCE DE BLANCO, PATRICIA OVIEDO, JULIO FONEVILA, HORACIO ANIBAL ELBERT, EDUARDO GABRIEL ORANI AND RAQUEL BULIT. A FULL LIST IS NOT AVAILABLE BECAUSE OF CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE ARREST-- PERSONS AT THE CHURCH WERE NOT ALL KNOWN TO ONE ANOTHER, AND IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE FOR THOSE NOT

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TAKEN TO SAY WITH PRECISION WHICH OF THEIR NUMBER HAD BEEN GRABBED.

5. THE ABDUCTION OF REMO BERARDO HAS NOT YET BEEN REPORTED IN THE PRESS. BERARDO HAS BEEN ACTIVE IN THE "DISAPPEARANCE ISSUE" SINCE HIS OWN BROTHER'S DISAPPEARANCE IN JULY OF 1976. HE WAS A USEFUL CONTACT OF THE EMBASSY AND WAS SCHEDULED TO MEET WITH THE AMBASSADOR ON DECEMBER 14.

6. ON SUNDAY DECEMBER 11 A MEMBER OF THE MOTHERS' GROUP MET WITH

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EMBASSY POLITICAL OFFICER TO REQUEST EMBASSY AND DEPARTMENT OF STATE ACTION ON BEHALF OF MISSING MOTHERS AND MEDH MEMBERS. MISS LUCIA BERARDO CALLED ON EMBASSY ON DECEMBER 12 WITH SIMILAR PLEAS FOR HER MISSING BROTHER. THE PERMANENT ASSEMBLY FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE LEAGUE FOR THE RIGHTS OF MAN PLAN TO SUBMIT HABEAS CORPUS PETITIONS FOR DISAPPEARED PERSONS WHOSE NAMES ARE KNOWN TODAY, DECEMBER 12.

7. AMBASSADOR SEES ADMIRAL MASSERA THIS EVENING AND WILL INQUIRE WHAT IS KNOWN ABOUT THIS MATTER AND REGISTER OUR CONCERN.
CASTRO

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